

## **Ward 6 NPA Meeting Agenda Thursday, February 3, 2022**

### **Public Forum, Call for Ward 6 NPA Steering Committee Members**

**Greg Epler-Wood, Ward 6 Ward Clerk:** requesting helpers for Town Meeting Day Election to help pre-process ballots, setting up for election, working on election day. All Burlington voters over 18 years old are invited to participate.

**Matt Grady:** call for steering committee members for Ward 6 NPA

### **Downtown Tax Financing District (TIF) Bond vote**

**Brian Pine, Burlington Community & Economic Development Office, Director:** Downtown Tax Financing District (TIF). The city uses TIFs a tool to create a district where the growth and value of properties is used to repay bond that was used to finance public improvements. A creative way to growth in value to repay the bond. The incremental growth goes to repay the bond. Voter item is how do we pay for project. The public process is to determine the design. BTV has two TIF districts. Voter needs to approve 4 new downtown blocks. Goal is to accommodate needs for varied users. Proposed design would provide wider sidewalks, dedicated bike lane, travel lane, and parking.

Current conditions do not accommodate stormwater runoff; new design will also reduce lake pollution.

Ravine sewer system is over 140 years old; will need restoration. Runs from College St. near library to Winooski Ave. Ravine system would be relocated.

Waterfront TIF district goes uphill and includes former mall.

8 TIF districts in VT; BTV established first district in 2011. One year from now is the deadline to borrow money for new debt for the district.

New project would improve Main St. from S. Union to Battery Sts. on street level and for underground utility upgrades.

New debt request is for \$25.9 million

TIF does not increase taxes for property owners in district.

**Question:** how can you (Brian) be so confident that growth in district would service the bond?

**Answer:** 1% growth rate will be adequate to service the bond. Surplus revenue goes to the state and the education fund.

### **Great Streets Main Street Concept Plan, Olivia Darisse and Laura Wheelock, Burlington Department of Public Works, Engineers:**

department engineers are working with Water Resources, CEDO, and VHB consultants, and landscape architects on Main St. project. Residents are encouraged to answer poll questions on website survey; community is encouraged to give feedback.

Great Streets Initiative started in 2016; standards were adopted in 2018. Proposal is to construct gathering places, construct bikeways, improve lighting and furnishings, improve stormwater management, and unify downtown core. Also includes wide sidewalks, tree belts to help infiltrate stormwater, protected bike lanes, rain gardens, and activated intersections to encourage gathering. Parking will convert to parallel parking. Three components for a Great Main Street include: function, unique and beautiful, and community led.

Gathering community input has started. DPW wants to maximize public's preference, feedback, and answers to questions. Construction will begin in fall of 2023. Website allows for giving feedback.

**Question:** What are the lessons learned from St. Paul St. project?

**Answer:** test soil and water in advance.

### **Burlington City Place Update, Don Sinex, Devonwood Investors, and Dave Farrington,**

**Farrington Construction:** lawsuits have hit project, but have now been settled. After frost is gone construction will start. Lender giving 130 million loan. Project is being underwritten; appraiser is working to finish appraisal by end of Feb. or March. Lawsuits cost 6-8 months. Progress made on DPW for streets, roads, and sewers. Construction loan commitment will allow project to start construction in the spring. Phase I of 3-phase project will begin. Front of mall is empty; LL Bean moving in July 2022. Phase II is in planning stages. Zoning permit for Phase II will enable project to start. Phase II is where LL Bean is now. Want Zoning permit this summer to start demo on LL Bean site. Brookfield indecision started long list of obstacles, including lawsuits. Phase II may get underway sooner as things have developed.

**Question:** Phase I opens St. Paul St.?

**Answer:** Yes

**Question:** Any visuals to share on latest iteration of project? Dave shared slides of plans. Restaurant rooftop is on western flank of observation deck; building also has conference and meeting rooms.

**Question:** you agreed in revised redevelopment agreement that building will be 90%+ electric.

**Answer:** the 10% remainder is to drive generators.

**Question:** What is the completion schedule? start with northern building; southern building started 6-9 months later. All will be done within 22 months of construction start.

Lots of retail on Cherry St. Plenty of retail on new St. Paul St. To the right of St. Paul is Phase II; there will be some retail components.

Don: if you have a business, please approach CityPlace about leasing space. We are encouraging local entrepreneurs.

**Question:** Is CityPlace on ballot?

**Answer:** No. was on the ballot in 2018.

Dave F: improvements to other areas, along with this project, make for a better downtown.

### **House of Representatives Update**

**Tiff Bluemle, VT State Representative (Chittenden 6-5)**

**Gabrielle Stebbins, VT State Representative (Chittenden 6-5)**

**Barbara Rachelson, VT State Representative (Chittenden 6-6)**

**Barbara, District 6-6:** Session started with no fanfare and with a lot of issues going on.

Legislators happy to follow up after NPA meeting. Her two issues, house passed S30, a bill that added sensible gun measures for public safety. Prohibits guns from hospitals. Hospitals have become violent places. Also changes made in how VTers are purchasing guns: 3 day waiting

period. In past 2 years in VT 28 firearms sold with no background check. Nine Guns went into hands of those who could not legally possess them.

**Budget Update:** budget adjustment to make changes in this fiscal year ending June 30. Policy committees work with appropriations committee/ Public hearings on budget coming up.

**Question:** Century Arms and assault arms are leaving the state, can something be done?

**Answer:** A lot of concern that adding anything to bill would prevent governor from signing it. Governor doesn't want any more gun laws so Barbara thinks there will be a struggle to get governor to sign gun legislation.

**Tiff Blumle:** there are consistent concerns about pupil weighting. Should aid be baked into base funding or should it be a grant? People should be vocal about concerns. Emergency housing being evaluated in terms of testimony received.

**Gabrielle Stebbins:** Legislature is working on four charter changes that Burlington supported: ranked choice voting; just-cause eviction; fees for new construction hooked up to fossil fuel; and expanding number of members to airport commission. Charter change language is broad. They are working their way through legislature. Legislators are looking for ways to expand home heating efficiency; power companies to purchase cleaner energy sources.

**Burlington School Board Update, Clare Wool School Board Chair:** Clare is running again, unopposed. District-wide funding for state of Vermont. VT Ed funding has been evaluated by academics. Weighting per-pupil has resulted in unequal funding. English language learners affected disproportionately. School board is asking Burlingtonians to adopt findings of study which shows underfunding of English language learners. Our ed dollars don't go as far as other districts because of cost to educate 60% of our students, and we're not being funded for that. FY '23 school budget. 98.2 million, increased from last budget by 2.5 million or 3.29%. Cost is \$19,000 per student. Have lost 200 students in BTV school district. Loss is due to COVID, PCBs, private schools, and New American population has reduced. Decrease in students, \$90 million Ed fund surplus at state level which will result in a property tax decrease; looking for voter support for high school; going back to Institute Road. The \$70 million bond has been returned. Starting over. Hopefully a new cost number ready by spring to vote on new bond. Nine schools outside district come to the BHS tech center. VT does not have school construction aid; we are only district in state looking to build a new HS; the sole burden is on taxpayers, so the board is looking for State and Federal funding for construction.

**Karen Paul and Joan Shannon, City Councilors:** Ballot items: school tax; lagging economic indicators; largest wage increase in years; CPI at highest rate in 1982 at 7%. Increase has caused an unsustainable situation for municipalities. Inflation driving increased budget. Using some ARPA money. Public wants to use most ARPA money for housing. Don't want to use it to fill the budget. 5.5% budget increase. Taxpayers will see 1.5% decrease in taxes. General obligation bond failed last time. Majority of difference is with Memorial Auditorium funding. TIF bond for public improvements will avoid raising property taxes. Ballot item is asking for permission to borrow \$25 million. Other charter change is to remove language regarding sex workers. Council cannot regulate sex work. Language is arcane and outdated. Only 7 municipalities in VT have this on the books. Many municipalities do not. State law is in place to address sex work. The council passed the charter changes almost unanimously.

Joan Shannon: wages and salary driving budget increase. Many positions with City are open. City needs to become more competitive with salaries. Joan did not support capital bond in December. Bond has been pared down and likes that it is on the March ballot. Tax increase is modest and needed. Helps that school budget has gone down.

Sex work is not decriminalized in BTV because there are state laws that prohibit it; it's the language that needed to change.

**Karen's statement on candidacy:** grateful for voter support over a long time and has strong sense of public service. Father served on Board of Alderman. Those serving in public life must be supported by family. Priorities remain the same: fiscal responsibility; housing as a human right; food security; strong and resilient public safety system; help for substance use disorders; safe housing for renters. Greatest highlight of service is meeting neighbors, constituent needs. Rewarding and energizing. Enhancing the lives of constituents very gratifying.